

Travel Manitoba Parks Evaluation Study Announcement

Q & A Document

Q: Why was the Travel Manitoba Parks Evaluation Study conducted?

A: The 2019 Tourism Strategy highlighted the untapped potential of Manitoba's Provincial Parks. It was revealed that there is significant demand for the types of travel experiences Manitoba can offer, including northern and Indigenous tourism, and world-class fishing, paddling and lakeside recreation. Based on this, the evaluation study was conducted to consider the current state of Manitoba's provincial parks and identify opportunities for modernizing and enhancing parks to improve visitor experiences of parks users, and ensuring the sustainability of provincial parks. The study will also help inform the new Manitoba Parks Strategy.

Q: What did the study look at?

A: The study evaluated the parks system through both qualitative and quantitative analysis and sought to learn more about how to enhance programming and facilities in the future. The report focuses on a number of themes, including opportunities to invest in parks to improve the experience for visitors, enhancing online services, improving financial sustainability so public parks can be enjoyed for generations to come, and increasing awareness of parks at home and abroad.

Q: Was the study a move towards park privatization?

A: No, privatization of provincial parks is not under consideration. Manitobans have told us that they value and cherish our Parks and we are making investments to ensure the legacy of our public parks system is protected for current and future generations. The recent creation of the Provincial Parks Endowment Fund makes annual investments in parks, preserving this public asset. Manitoba is also developing a new multi-year parks capital investment strategy, to help modernize and enhance campgrounds, roads, trails, and other key infrastructure. Manitoba is committed to keeping parks public; and sustaining and enhancing these treasured areas is a high priority.

Q: How did the study ensure inclusive public participation?

A: An important component of the study was surveying a wide range of stakeholders for input, such as park users and non-users, Manitobans and non-Manitobans, stakeholder groups, local communities near certain parks, and park staff. Thousands of individuals participated. The study's authors also looked at park systems in Canada, the United States, and at select locations around the world to understand how different jurisdictions operate and deliver services to visitors in their parks.

Q: What are the next steps now that the study has been released?

A: The Travel Manitoba Parks Evaluation Study provides a compelling case for renewed investments in our parks, consistent with a strategic infrastructure investment plan, to modernize and transform parks into the future. Manitoba has received the report and will continue exploring it in further detail as we develop our bold, future-focused comprehensive strategy to enhance and conserve our provincial park system and the

ecosystems they support. The recommendations in the study, as well as the results and analysis of the surveys conducted, will serve as important information for the Manitoba government to inform the development of a Parks Strategy.

Q: What are the next steps in the development of the parks strategy?

A: This report offers some important insights into how we may want to shape a new Parks Strategy to ensure all visitors have the best possible experience. Work to develop the new park strategy is in its early days and park users, Indigenous partners and others will be engaged in this process as we move forward.

The strategy will build off of the important work from Travel Manitoba and also reflect areas of focus that Manitobans have shared are priorities including on service excellence for park users and sustainability of parks so that they remain enjoyable for generations of Manitobans to come. In addition it will also look enhancing conservation, improving accessibility for all as well as exploring new partnership opportunities including those that support economic reconciliation with Indigenous partners. Manitoba will be launching a public survey in 2023 to seek input on all aspects of a new strategy.

The department will further work to bring user groups together and work collaboratively to develop a successful strategy and deliver on outcomes.